

# Taiwan, China and Central American Allies: A Discourse Analysis of the Costa Rican Diplomatic Shift News Coverage

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## Abstract

This present study examines the news coverage of the Costa Rican diplomatic shift from Taipei towards Beijing in June 2007. The event represented a turning point for the Latin American nation, as well as for the region in which other seven countries had strategic diplomatic alliance with Taiwan. Costa Rica was the first country to recognize Beijing and represented a potential risk for Taipei as other Central American allies might follow the same road. Drawing from Discourse Analysis, as well as Allan Bell's news discourse structure model, three articles have been chosen and extensively analyzed. The research questions are "How is the process of the Costa Rica's diplomatic shift framed?" and "What is the portrayed image of the actors concerned by the diplomatic shift?" The findings show that the Costa Rican diplomatic shift was negatively portrayed in the articles. The political reasons and circumstances carried out under the agreement between Costa Rica and China were particularly criticized. Taiwan was mostly portrayed as bearing the consequences and partially accused of deploying the so-called checkbook diplomacy. Furthermore, China was considered as an economic strong force with no respect for human rights and followed only its own interests, while Costa Rica was regarded as abandoning its humanitarian advocacy for pure economic purposes.

**Keywords:** Taiwan, Central America, Costa Rica, China, international relations, diplomacy, discourse analysis, news coverage

## I. Introduction

The Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) has formal diplomatic relations with 23 countries. Around a 52% of them are located in Latin America and the Caribbean area: six Central American countries (Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama), five Caribbean countries (the Dominican Republic, Haiti, St. Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and the sole South American country, Paraguay. Latin America is clearly Taipei's most consistent and relevant stronghold in the world.

Until 2007, also Costa Rica was within this group. Nevertheless, in June of that year the Central American country shifted from the alliance with Taipei to the one of Beijing (Mendelson Forman & Moreira, 2009; Associated Press, 2007, June 6). The diplomatic shift has been disclosed a week later the delegation in a secret mission from Costa Rica signed the agreement in Beijing. It was revealed to the public thanks to an appeal by the Costa Rican newspaper "La Nación" at the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court (La Tribuna, 2011, March 4). As the role of Costa Rican newspaper "La Nación," there were other similar cases in which the Central American newspapers not only played a 'watchdog role' but, moreover, enacted a real advocacy role. Another emblematic example is the one of the Guatemalan newspaper "elPeriódico." On 23 September 2007, in occasion of the then-Taiwanese president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) visit to Guatemala to sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), "elPeriódico" published an article about former Guatemalan President Portillo's case of embezzling Taiwanese funds for private usage, as well as other Central American Presidents accepting funds from Taiwan for unofficial purposes. From these two examples, it can be seen that those newspapers kept a watchful eye on the actors and their conducts connected to unofficial actions within the diplomatic relations. As the diplomatic shift of Costa Rica had not been transparent, it received special coverage from several Central American and international press (cf. References). Consequently, it attracted our interests to explore the features of the press coverage on the Costa Rican diplomatic shift. Two questions are proposed to examine Latin America's news coverage of this event. First, "how is the process of the Costa Rica's diplomatic shift framed?"

Second, “what is the portrayed image of the actors concerned by the diplomatic shift?”

Drawing from Discourse Analysis’ specific method to analyze news stories, i.e. Discourse Structure of News Stories, this paper provides detailed examinations of articles from “elPeriódico” and “La Tribuna,” Guatemalan and Honduran online newspapers, as well as one article from the most renowned online newspaper in Costa Rica, “La Nación.”

## II. Historical Context

### “One China Policy” and “One China Principle”

Taiwan’s international status is the result of People’s Republic of China (PRC) insistence on its “One China Policy” (一個中國政策) since 1949, which claims there is only “One China” and the Republic of China (henceforth ROC or Taiwan) is part of it. Consequently, the countries having diplomatic relations with the PRC cannot establish relationship with Taiwan, and vice versa. In Taiwan, there are several discourses related to the issue, two interpretations stand out. On the one side, have a similar perspective to the PRC’s one but different definition and, on the other, there is a standpoint that fully refute PRC’s definition of “One China Policy”.

On one side, the interpretation of the “Chinese Nationalist Party” (or Kuomintang, KMT, 國民黨) that considers the “One China Principle” (一個中國原則), in which both sides recognize there is only one China but agree to differ on its definition (一個中國, 各自表述) about the legitimate government. On the other side, there is the interpretation of “one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait].” (一邊一國) proposed by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨). There are also some perspectives lying in-between those poles. In this kind of ‘tug-of-war situation’ between Taiwan and China (Erikson & Chen, 2007; Erikson, 2009), both countries have been in an international advancement to get their own position recognized. Latin America is one of those territories that serve as the rope in the tug-of-war situation.

## ROC, Costa Rica and Latin American countries

In terms of contemporary diplomatic relations, Taiwan had long-term partnerships with many Latin American countries. Prior to the transfer of the “Chinese Nationalist Party” to Taipei, Latin America had formal relations with China. Costa Rica established formal relations with the ROC in 1944. As for the other current Latin American allies, Panama established its diplomatic relations with the ROC in 1922, Guatemala in 1933, Honduras and El Salvador in 1954, Paraguay in 1977 and Belize in 1989 (Rodríguez, 2008: 211, based in information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ROC). Nicaragua had a special case, as the first recognition was in 1962 until 1985 and again from 1990. During the lapse of time from 1985 to 1990, given internal politics, Nicaragua established its alliance with the PRC (Chow, 1998: 93). As for Costa Rica, it switched the diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 2007 (Mendelson Forman & Moreira, 2009; Associated Press, 2007, June 6).

## KMT retreat, the Cold War and the situation in Latin America

In 1949, when the Nationalists were defeated by the Communists, the ROC retreats to the island of Taiwan. At that time, Central America shifted in the same direction as Washington: towards Taipei. As decades went by, the Cold War started in the 1950s had divided the world. As for Latin America and the Caribbean basin, there were also different situations in the countries within the region. In Cuba, a communist revolution took place and other Central American countries, such as El Salvador and Nicaragua, had socialist experiences and experienced sweeping popular and peasant movements. In Cuba, Fidel Castro and Ernesto “Che” Guevara conducted the insurrection that overthrew Fulgencio Batista’s government in 1959 (Cuban Online Encyclopedia, 2012; Suárez, 2009). As for other Latin American countries, also partially inspired by the Cuban revolution (Suárez, 2009), several popular and peasant movements burgeoned in these years and flourished in uprisings and civil wars during the eighties. Examples can be found in El Salvador’s “Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional” (FMLN, Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) in El Salvador and Nicaragua’s “Frente Sandinista para la Liberación Nacional.” (FSLN, Sandinista National Liberation Front)

In Costa Rica, it is worth mentioning the advance of the “Partido Vanguardia Popular” (PVP, the Costa Rican communist party), allied itself with the “Partido Republicano Nacional” (PRN, the National Republican Party) during the early 40s (Lehoucq, 1991: 37-38), but was annulled during the 1948 Civil War and was not allowed to advance its political development further (Lehoucq, 1991: 38). Costa Rica’s civil war lasted only 44 days but with lasting effects for paving the way of the new Constitution in 1949. Seligson and Muller (1987: 308) described this transition was “fought, in large measure, to foil the efforts by the incumbent party to tamper with the electoral process. The new Constitution of 1949 removed all property, literacy, and sex qualifications for suffrage. The army was also out-lawed as an institution thereby removing the armed forces from politics and further opening the path to civilian participation. All of these elements together combined to produce steady growth of popular participation in elections.”

### From 1961 to late 1980s

As Chow (1998: 43) pointed out, Costa Rica remained one of the most visited countries in Latin America by Taiwanese officials from 1961 to 1970. The other two Latin American countries that most often received visits from Taiwan were Colombia and Paraguay.

During the seventies many countries shifted towards the PRC and Taiwan lost its seat in the United Nations. Nevertheless, most Central American countries remained loyal allies to Taipei. The period from 1971 to 1979 was the most difficult for Taiwan’s world diplomatic recognition. In 1971 and 1972 Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Ecuador, Jamaica and Peru moved towards a diplomatic relation with Beijing. In 1974, Brazil and Venezuela took the same direction. (Chow, 1998)

By the exception of the newly-independent countries of the Caribbean area’s recognition, Taiwan bore the Nicaraguan switch towards Beijing in 1985. It was not until 1990 that Nicaragua turned back to diplomatically recognize Taiwan. While the President Daniel Ortega’s late nineties term was Beijing-oriented, his successor Violeta Barrios de Chamorro switched to recognize Taiwan (Chow, 1998).

## The 1980s in Central America: the role of the U.S. and Taiwan

The situation in Central America, especially for El Salvador, Guatemala and Nicaragua, during the eighties was not a peaceful one. Just to take the case of El Salvador, the country was in civil war from 1980 to 1992. The conflict of the military-led government and the liberation army FMLN front had thousands disappeared and around 75'000 killed. Central America, considered its 'back courtyard' by the United States, received financial support from the U.S. to avoid anti-communist governments and prevent any communist party from ruling the countries in the region. The financial support was deployed to buy weapons and to engage in military action. Taiwan had a similar role as the U.S., given that Central America military members were trained in the Fu Xing Kang College (a.k.a. "Fu Hsing Kang," 復興崗) (Aguilera Peralta, 2006: 172). Any country offering financial support or military training contributed to suppressing uprisings, or fueling civil wars resulted into killing thousands of civilians. Therefore, the role of the U.S. and Taiwan during those years is highly controversial.

## The 1980s in Costa Rica: the main challenging issues

Costa Rica had a rather peaceful situation than its neighbors, but it also had to deal with the regional violent upheavals and subsequent consequences. Costa Rica had to bestow for two issues: the refugees from Central America and the 'contras' in the northern border (Furlong, 1987). The first issue, i.e. refugees, was displaced people arriving mainly from El Salvador and Nicaragua. As Furlong (1987: 129) explains "the number of refugees grew by about 400 per month during the first half of 1986. Although only 25,000 were registered at the time, officials estimated as many as 250,000 could have entered (Tico Times, 1986b: 9). Costa Rica has neither the resources nor the international assistance to support, feed, house, and clothe such large numbers of refugees. This situation began to affect Costa Rican public opinion and the country's open refugee and political asylum policy. First, the country was flooded with refugees from El Salvador in 1980-82, only to be followed by a second flood from Nicaragua." When Óscar Arias took office in 1986, this had become the major problem he had to deal with. The second issue that Costa Rica had to

deal with was related to the rebel group ‘Contras’ opposing the government led by the FSLN in Nicaragua. It was Costa Rica’s major international and national defense issue in the period from 1985 to 1987 (Furlong, 1987: 128). The north of Costa Rica was often used by the US-supported ‘Contras’ as “sanctuary and staging ground for attacks into Nicaragua” (Furlong, 1987: 130), creating tension between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

The overall complex situation led to President Arias to seek peace in the region. The peace-making process that involved Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua started in May 1986, but was not completed until 7 August 1987. As described in a fragment of the book “Les Prix Nobel” (1988), Arias “concentrated on engaging Nicaragua and the other Central American states in a peace-making process. In May 1986, he met the Presidents of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua to discuss the proposals for a peaceful solution that had been worked out by the Contadora group. They did not reach full agreement, but early in 1987 Arias succeeded in calling a new meeting at which he submitted his own peace plan, departing in some respects from the Contadora plan. The accord approved by the five Presidents in Guatemala on August 7 was based on President Arias’ plan.” The profuse efforts by Oscar Arias were awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.

### **From 2000 to 2007: Taiwan’s international standpoint and Latin American countries**

During the 2000 presidential election, the Chinese Nationalist Party was defeated by the Democratic Progressive Party and Chen Shui-bian became president of Taiwan. As mentioned, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) holds a position “one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait]” and refuses the “One China Policy.” The standpoint taken by DPP provoked that the relations of Taiwan and China were deadlocked. Therefore, the diplomatic recognition by Central American countries and Paraguay were of utmost importance. It is emblematic that during Chen Shui-bian’s time in office, he visited Latin America three times and the Vice-President Annette Lu Hsiu-lien (呂秀蓮) visited the region two times (Pérez Expósito, 2004a: 9). An emblematic example is Chen’s 2005 presidential visit to Guatemala. With the

aim to sign the FTA, Chen was escorted by a committee of 120 people, most of them officers and entrepreneurs (Fischer, 2005). Another common example is the one of visits of Latin American representative and elite members to the island offered by the Taiwanese government (Casas-Zamora, 2009; Aguilera Peralta, 2006). While Casas-Zamora starkly expresses an evaluation of the features of these visits, Aguilera Peralta remains more moderate. Casas-Zamora (2009) argues that “(...) as in the case of other countries, Costa Rica’s relationship with Taiwan was fraught with conflicts of interest and outright corruption.” (22nd paragraph) In particular, the author illustrates one of those cases by “the legendary “fact finding” trip to Taiwan that was routinely offered to politicians, journalists, trade union leaders, etc., in which they were given super-VIP treatment and lavished with, literally, thousands of dollars in gifts and shopping vouchers” and mentions that he was personally offered one of those trip in May 2006, which he declined. Aguilera Peralta (2006: 173) refers that “the Embassies of Taiwan are very efficient in public relations and have developed an extensive program of invitations to the island, sustained over decades. As a result, an important central sector of the regional elites have visited Taipei and other areas of Taiwan and as well as been generously welcomed, which resulted in attitudes favorable to their positions.”

### “Checkbook Diplomacy”

As seen in the previous section, there is a certain controversial aspect in the public relations in the trips offered by the Taiwanese government. A further controversial action taken by the Taiwanese government is the “**Checkbook Diplomacy**” (金錢外交, also called “dollar diplomacy”) (Fischer, 2005; Erikson & Chen, 2007; Erikson, 2009). This kind of diplomacy includes any action taken in direct financial assistance, with no bind of audit regarding the direct transferred funds. While the government of Taiwan cannot be accused for the lack of transparency by the local counterpart, it still remains the fact that accountability could contribute to avoid these unlawful files. As a matter of fact, transferred funds have been often privately used by the local politicians. One example is the case of former Guatemalan head of state. Alfonso Portillo, in office from 2000 to 2004, is accused to have embezzled three 500,000 U.S. dollars checks of donations from Taiwan. (Erikson & Chen 2007: 79) These



issues have received the attention of the Latin American and Taiwanese media, which also portrayed negatively the Taiwanese role in the above mentioned diplomatic strategy (Fischer, 2005; China Post, 2004, October 24).

In the specific case of Costa Rica, during October 2004, both former Costa Rican Presidents Miguel Angel Rodríguez and Abel Pacheco received funds for thousands of dollars from the Taiwanese government for unexplained purposes (Aguilera Peralta, 2006: 175; Erikson & Chen, 2007: 79; Rodríguez, 2008: 233). As a result, Chen Shui-bian's government was strongly criticized and internationally embarrassed (Erikson & Chen, 2007: 79).

### Costa Rica's diplomatic shift

There was a specific loss to Taiwan and Chen Shui-bian's government in June 2007: the Costa Rican diplomatic shift. Every country diplomatically recognizing Taipei stands for Taiwanese's sovereignty, opposes PRC's "One China Policy" and supports both KMT's "One China Principle" and DPP's "one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait]." If the country breaks the ties with Taipei and starts a diplomatic alliance with Beijing, it reduces Taiwan's international support to the claims of sovereignty and creates a potential risk in other diplomatic allies that might follow the same direction. Therefore, any single diplomatic shift towards Beijing can be considered a loss to Taiwan.

Costa Rica ended the 63-year-formal diplomatic relation with Taiwan when the president at that time, Óscar Arias, switched into the diplomatic recognition towards Beijing (Mendelson Forman & Moreira, 2009; Associated Press, 2007, June 6). Óscar Arias explained the diplomatic shift as "an act of foreign policy realism which promotes our links to Asia. It is my responsibility to recognize a global player as important as the People's Republic of China." (Mendelson Forman & Moreira, 2009: 99) In terms of numbers and benefits for Costa Rica's diplomatic shift, it is mentioned that "in exchange for Costa Rica's move to expel Taiwan's diplomatic mission, Beijing agreed to buy \$300 million of Costa Rican bonds and provide \$130 million in aid to the country, as well as provide scholarships to enable study in China (New York Times, 2008,

September 12 in Erikson, 2009: 6). It may appear as a sudden move, but actually Casas-Zamora (2009) argues the convenience of the shift has been discussed in Costa Rica's foreign policy circles for more than 10 years: "[t]here was, on the one hand, the subtle pressure of knowing that most Latin American countries established diplomatic relations with the PRC already in the 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, and more poignantly, there was the increasing evidence that, since 2000, when Costa Rica's bilateral trade with the PRC surpassed trade with Taiwan for the first time, the PRC was poised to become a vital economic partner for the country." (4<sup>th</sup> paragraph) In regards of Taiwan, President Arias said at a news conference "Taiwan has been very generous and I thank it for the solidarity and co-operation it has shown for nearly 60 years, but I have taken this decision thinking of all the Costa Ricans." (Associated Press, 2007, June 6)

From the Taiwanese perspective, the diplomatic relation with a reputed country -in its diplomatically most important region- was a significant loss. In fact, Costa Rica represented a democratic and economical good model for the Central American region. Furlong (1987: 121) mentions that the country possess "the oldest functioning democracy" and (1987: 134) "Costa Ricans are proud of their democratic system and accord it a high degree of legitimacy. There may be disagreement as to policy, personalities, and which political party can best govern Costa Rica, but support for democracy is widespread." For its democracy and prosperity, as well as the absence of an army and its neutral role<sup>1</sup> (Furlong, 1987: 120-21), Costa Rica was often labeled as the "Switzerland

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<sup>1</sup> As Furlong (1987) describes in the section "Neutrality policy" of his paper "Costa Rica: Caught between Two Worlds" the neutrality of Costa Rica is actually not fully equal to the Swiss neutrality. Furlong (1987: 141) mentions "On 15 September 1983, President Luis Alberto Monge announced a policy of neutrality for his country. He proposed that this policy would be permanent, active, but unarmed -in regard to military conflict. This concept of neutrality differs somewhat from more traditional concepts of neutrality (of Switzerland and Austria, for example). Costa Rica has no real military establishment or civilian militia which can protect the nation in times of conflict. Hence, Costa Rica must rely upon the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the Rio act. So, unlike Switzerland, Costa Rica will remain unarmed in the sense that no real military force or militia will be established." Nevertheless, Furlong (1987: 142) that, prior to Monge's presidency, there were some specific actions in which Costa Rica abandoned its neutrality: during the 50s as base to fight dictatorship in the region and in 1978 with the support to the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua.

of Central America.” In addition to that, another reason of this label comes from the fact that Costa Rica was an exception of the violent situation during the eighties in Central America, in which President Óscar Arias<sup>2</sup> played a crucial mediator-role in the peace-making process to end civil wars in the regions, and was awarded Nobel Peace Prize for this effort in 1987.

Mendelson Forman and Moreira (2009: 100) mentioned that the Taiwanese government feared that a “domino effect” could unfold and other Central American cut their ties with Taiwan, allured by the economical rise of China. Nevertheless, this “domino effect” revealed to be unfounded (Rodríguez, 2008; Erikson, 2009). In fact, Erikson (2009: 6) argues that “a nearly two year period of hiatus has settled in after several years of frenetic activity, and no other Latin American or Caribbean country has followed in Costa Rica’s footsteps.” The author considers a potential explanation of a series of facts such as “inattention from China, Taiwan’s active diplomacy, the lessening of tensions in the Taiwan Strait, and a ‘wait-and-see’ attitude by other Central American governments, who want to know how China’s relationship with Costa Rica evolves before embarking on a similar path. What has become clear over the past two years, however, is that China is focusing on creating a model relationship with Costa Rica that will serve as a regional example of the benefits of formalizing ties to Beijing.” (Erikson, 2009: 6). Moreover, Casas-Zamora’s viewpoint about the other allies’ loyalty to Taiwan was based on their own national situation: “(...) what is crucial to understand is that for a middle income country like Costa Rica, official development assistance is of marginal importance, comprising less than 3% of GDP at any given year and less than 0.3% if only non-reimbursable grants are included. This is not the situation of Nicaragua, where development aid is nearly one seventh of the economy, or Honduras, where it is about 7% [Figures on Nicaragua and Honduras from: <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry>] There, the future benefits of a yet underdeveloped commercial links with the PRC pale into insignificance when compared to the immediate economic and political benefits derived from Taiwanese aid. In a way, it was simply the higher level of development of the Costa Rican economy that rendered the diplomatic switch towards Beijing

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<sup>2</sup> Oscar Arias has served as President from 1986 to 1990 and from 2006 to 2010.

attractive. For a small, open, middle income economy, such as Costa Rica, placing on a sound and secure basis its vigorous trade links with the PRC is a pretty reasonable proposition.” (2008, 17<sup>th</sup> paragraph)

The series of happenings of severing ties with Taipei and shifting towards Beijing started in mid May 2007. Costa Rica, then still in diplomatic alliance with Taiwan, voted against the Taiwanese membership in the World Health Organization (WHO) on 14 May 2007 at the General Assembly (*Al día*,<sup>3</sup> 2007, May 17; Associated Press, 2007, June 6). Taiwan was asking for the eleventh occasion to be a member of the WHO. Nevertheless, the request was rejected by 148 votes against 17 votes. Those votes supporting the Taiwanese request came mostly from its diplomatic allies, four allies were absent (Panama, Nicaragua, Marshall Islands and Saint Lucia), Haiti abstained to vote, the Dominican Republic had no right to vote and the Vatican is not member of the WHO. The vote of Costa Rica baffled Taipei as the spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, David C.Y. Wang mentioned that it was “something unexpected.” (*Al día*, 2007, May 17)

Ten days after the WHO General Assembly, on May 25th, Foreign Minister James Huang encountered officials from Costa Rica and other Latin American countries in Belize City to reinforce diplomatic relations (Associated Press, 2007, June 6). Despite the meeting on May 25th, Costa Rica continued with the plans of diplomatic shifting. On 1 June 2007, the secret mission in Beijing composed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Stagno and Minister of Finance, Guillermo Zúniga established the diplomatic relations with China (Álvarez Araya, 2012). On 6 June 2007, President Arias informed the Costa Ricans about the decision and Minister Stagno asked the staff of the Embassy of Taiwan in San José to leave the country within one month (Álvarez Araya, 2012).

The newly-established diplomatic relation requires Costa Rica to evaluate and even to cancel or at least be silent about specific issues sensitive to China. As Erikson (2009: 7) describes “[o]f course, Costa Rica’s deepening relationship with China has circumscribed its ability to deal with issues that are

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<sup>3</sup> *Al día* is a Costa Rican newspaper.

sensitive to the Chinese leadership beyond just Taiwan. For example, in August 2008, Arias asked the Dalai Lama, a fellow Nobel Peace Prize winner and the spiritual leader of Tibet, to cancel a planned private visit to Costa Rica. Arias cited “scheduling problems,” but it is clear that he knew that a visit by the Dalai Lama would have sacrificed Costa Rica’s chance to host Hu Jintao later that year.” As early as 2008 the process to sign-up a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) started with a tour by Hu Jintao (La Tribuna, 2008, November 17). The FTA was concluded in 2010, and Costa Rica becomes the only nation in Central American to have a FTA with China, while El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama have a FTA with Taiwan (Bureau of Free Trade, 2103).

### III. Research Questions

The Costa Rica’s diplomatic shift comes from a very complex background, including concepts as “One China Policy” and “One China Principle”, the “Checkbook diplomacy”, among others. As seen through the pages of history, Costa Rica has a unique political and economic situation among the Central American countries. This has been also obvious when the diplomatic shift has taken place and the country is presently being the sole Central American country to recognize Beijing instead of Taipei. In such a complex framework, it appears interesting to explore how the news coverage has been structured. Therefore, two research questions arise from this context:

Research Question 1: How is the process of the Costa Rica’s diplomatic shift framed?

Research Question 2: What is the portrayed image of the actors\* concerned by the diplomatic shift?

\*: By actors it is referred from an active or a passive role, i.e. Costa Rica, China, Taiwan and its officers and politicians.

## IV. Research Method

Discourse Studies is seen as “a problem oriented interdisciplinary research movement subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods and agenda” (van Dijk, 2011: 397). This research movement has two interesting characteristics: it comes from scholars with different backgrounds and has different areas of inquiry such as political discourse, media, advertisement, ideology, racism, institutional discourse (Blommaert, 2005: 21). Despite the different realms and applications, there is a strong link within the Discourse Studies: the shared perspective and program in “critiquing and changing society, in contrast to traditional theory oriented solely to understanding or explaining it.” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009: 6).

In seeking for dissembling the specific ideologies and leanings, two analytical researches within the Discourse Studies are worth to be mentioned. First, the analytical research of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) “is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2001: 352). The basic questions for CDA research are (1) “how do (more) powerful groups control public discourse?” (2) “how does such discourse control mind and action of less powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?” (van Dijk, 2001: 355). Second, there is the Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) focusing in the critical analysis of political messages. While it cannot be fully separated of the CDA, this analytical research focuses in a political realm. This realm is intended in broad sense, including “all official or unofficial political actors, events, encounters, settings, actions and discourses, but also, more abstractly, political processes (like ‘perestrojka’), political systems (like democracy and communism), political ideologies (like liberalism), and political (group) relations (such as power, inequality, hegemony, and oppression).” (van Dijk, 1998: 15)

Discourse Analysis in the news coverage has offered very interesting outcomes about wide variety of issues in different contexts. Li Juan (2009)

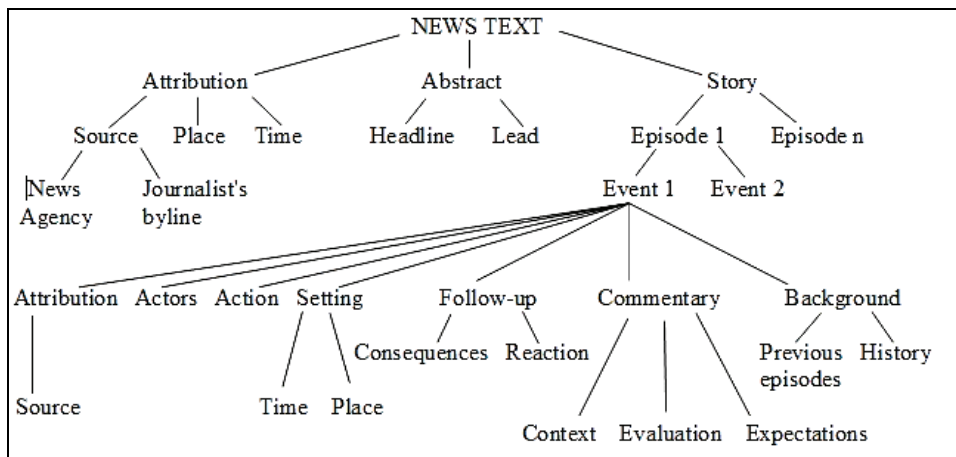
has deployed the CDA paradigm to examine the intertextuality and national identity of key events news coverage by daily newspapers in United States and in China. Li compares how “News York Times” and “China Daily” reported about the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade (7 May 1999) and the collision between a US military aircraft and a Chinese fighter jet in South China Sea (1 April 2001). The study examines how the two daily newspapers employ discursive strategies in the construction of national identity, focusing in the structural parts and types of information. In turn, Smeeta Mishra (2008) analyses the post 9/11 representation of Turkish, Iraqi and Iranian contexts in U.S. Press. The study explores representations of democracy and Islam of articles published in “The New York Times,” “The Washington Post”, “The Wall Street Journal” as well as the “Los Angeles Times”, between 11 September 2001 and 31 December 2005. The author analyzes both explicit and implicit components to see the dominant and counter-discourses provided within these newspapers. The dominant discourse can be examined from the lexical choices and in the counter-discourse, from the use of labels, rhetoric, metaphors, among others. Peter Teo (2000) analyses how two Sydney-based newspapers report about the issues connected to a Vietnamese gang active in violent and drug dealings in Australia. Teo takes five articles of “The Daily Telegraph” and four “The Sydney Morning” published from May to August 1995. The analysis proceeds in two stages: first, a “broad characterization of the newspaper discourse” (Teo, 2000: 13) to show the ‘othering’ and stereotyping; and second, a comparative analysis of two reports of “an asymmetrical power discourse between the (ethnic) law-breakers and the (white) law-enforcers.” (Teo, 2000: 7).

The Discourse Structure of News Stories by Allan Bell (2011: 59) offers an interesting and useful framework and method to analyze news texts. It starts from the question “What does this story actually say it happened?” Differently to other methods within the Discourse Analysis, Bell’s discourse structure of news stories departs from a very simple base (cf. Figure 1) to go further toward the more complex and abstract levels within the text. This method will be further explored.

## V. Instrument

The Discourse Structure of News Texts by Allan Bell (1991, 1998) offers a structured tool to analyze the news texts, allowing dismantling the components of the news articles and the parts within the text (cf. Figure 1).

Analyses of the selected three news reports are presented with English translation only due to the limit of the space. The articles are presented in chronological order, so that the first article was published in 2008, the second one in 2011 and the last one was published in 2012.



Sources: Bell (1991: 171; 1998: 61).

Figure 1: Model discourse structure for news texts

The Discourse Structure of News Stories, departing from a simple base of analysis, intends to serve as the foundation for the below analysis. Its focus arises from the **five Ws** and an **H**: “**who**”, “**what**”, “**when**”, “**where**”, “**why**” and “**how**.” The elements of news text are **attribution**, **abstract** and **story** (first level, cf. Figure 1). Within attribution, **source** (the news agency or the journalist's byline), **place** and **time** (second level) are considered. The abstract includes the **headline** and the **lead**, which introduces some information about the main event, time and places. The story considers the episodes that are in turn composed by one or more events. Those describe **actors**, **actions**, **setting** (time



and place), as well as the **follow-up** (consequences and reaction), **commentary** (context, evaluation, expectations) and **background** (previous episodes and history).

The above described news structure analysis and the Figure 1 are likely to be deployed for single-sentence news, commonly released by news agencies and in even corners or column news brief of newspapers. Likewise, it serves as the base for more complex, extensive news. Additionally, for a more in-depth news stories, Bell provides a news structure composes of five main elements: “what”, “who”, “where”, “when” and the “event and discourse structure.” The event and discourse structure provide the “why” and “how”. “What” provides a guide for the (1) **headline**, the (2) **lead**, the (3) **events**, and the (4) **relation among those elements**. “Who” is connected to the (5) **story attribution**, (6) **sources attribution** and (7) **news actors**. “Where” is related to (8) **places** and (9) **place structure**. “When” guides the analysis for (10) **times**, (11) **time structure**, (12) **background**, (13) **commentary** and (14) **follow-up**. “Event and discourse structure” serves to review the (15) **event structure** (time, place and connected facts), (16) **discourse structure**, (17) **cohesion** (linkages within episodes, cause-and-effects relationship or absence of those) and (18) **confusion** (presence of ambiguities, gaps, etc.).

## VI. Analysis

### Corpus

The three selected articles come from online newspapers of different countries in Central America: Guatemala (“elPeriódico”), Honduras (“La Tribuna”) and Costa Rica (“La Nación”). Despite the different national origin of the online newspapers, “elPeriódico”, “La Tribuna” and “La Nación” have in common to be newspapers that actively play a ‘watchdog role’ and thus, commonly confronting the official discourse. In fact, “elPeriódico” is a newspaper dedicated to investigative journalism that has shown an active ‘watchdog’ role. As previously mentioned, the newspaper had denounced the transfer of funds to former Guatemalan President Alfonso Portillo during Chen

Shui-bian's administration, that was used for private purposes by the head of state. Seemingly to the Guatemalan newspaper, "La Tribuna" advocates for an investigative journalism aiming to play a watchdog role and publishes about regional issues. "La Tribuna" has often covered issues related to Free Trade Agreements and, in this corpus, the article includes WikiLeaks cables, originally published by "La Nación," as source of information. In similar wise to "elPeriódico" and "La Tribuna," "La Nación" engages in investigative journalism in Costa Rica and Central America. Furthermore, it had a specific watchdog role during the diplomatic shift. As a matter of fact, "La Nación" presented an appeal to the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court, forcing to disclose details of the deal. Moreover, "La Nación" published the WikiLeaks cables of the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica.

The articles were searched in the online version of the newspapers, through the search engine of each website. From the 30 articles related to the issue, the three articles selected are varied in perspective and type of text. Starting from the headlines, they contain information connected to the actors or the process of the diplomatic shift. The article "The arm-wrestling's prize won by China is Costa Rica" published in "elPeriódico" focuses in the triangle Taiwan-China and Costa Rica. It is interesting to mention an enriched contextualization of the cross-strait historical facts and contemporary relations. "U.S.: Costa Rica-China is a marriage of convenience" published in "La Tribuna" departs from the U.S. perspective about the diplomatic relation between Costa Rica and China and refers to Taiwan only briefly. As mentioned in the historical context in this paper, U.S. has historically shown interest in the region and purposely intervenes in key events and processes. The article by "La Tribuna" shows the U.S. perspective about the damaging of its own interests. Last but not least, the article "Why Arias replaced Taiwan for China?" focuses in the political and economic reasons of Costa Rica's diplomatic shift, while the cross-strait relations remain at a background.

### First article, by "elPeriódico", Guatemala

In the article "*En el pulso que ganó China, Costa Rica es el premio*" ("The arm-wrestling's prize won by China is Costa Rica"), published 12 October 2008,

the journalist Gabriela Lenhoff takes as key event the Costa Rican diplomatic shift towards Beijing. It also outlines the historical relations of China and Taiwan, as well as the 63-year-diplomatic relation of Costa Rica and Taiwan. Furthermore, in a future perspective, it offers a general description of the incoming steps that China and Costa Rica will have in their newly-established diplomatic alliance.

The article is divided into six parts: **headline**, **lead**, sections “*Independencia?*” (“Independence?”) and “*Historia de desavenencias*” (“History of disagreements”) that serves as **background**, as well as the introductory part (no title) and the section “*Compra de bonos y más*” (“Bonds purchase and further”). In addition, the article provides a photo of Ma Ying-jeou delivering a speech in 2008, at the Taiwan Business Alliance. The **headline** contains the presupposition that the reader knows that the opponent of the arm-wrestling played by China is Taiwan.

(H) “The arm-wrestling's prize won by China is Costa Rica”

The headline contains three causal events: 1. there was an arm-wrestling; 2. it was won by China; and 3. the prize is Costa Rica.

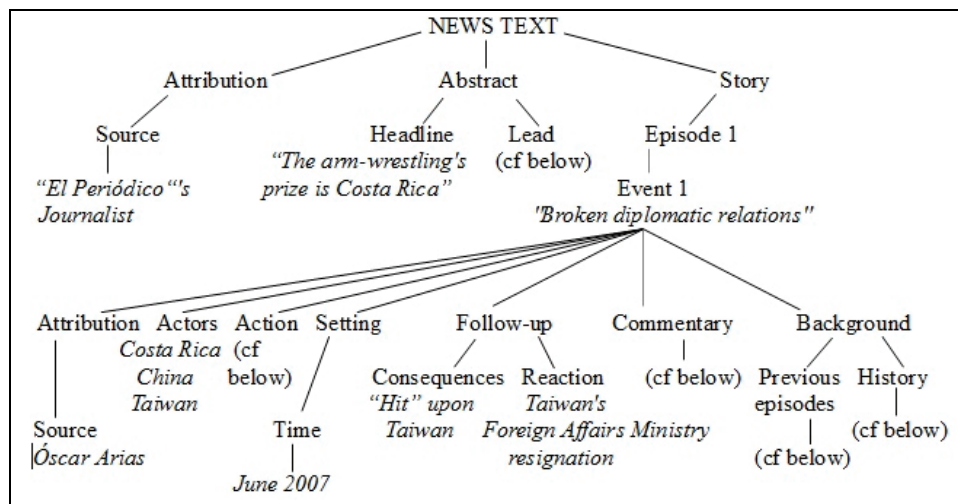


Figure 2: Model discourse structure of “The arm-wrestling's prize won by China is Costa Rica”

The **lead** continues the headline's metaphor, informs the reader that “the other player” is Taiwan (or confirms if the reader already knows) and further explains the state of the ‘international advancement’.

(L) “China and Taiwan have a diplomatic arm-wrestling, China has greater international recognition, but Taiwan seeks to maintain the few [countries] who support them”

As far as the “journalistic 5 Ws and an H” are concerned, the **headline** and the **lead** provide the “who” and “what”, but do not provide the “when”, “where”, “why” and “how”. Even the “who” and “what” are still vaguely mentioned. In fact, while countries of the “arm-wrestling” are mentioned, there is no reference to officers who carried out the diplomatic shifts and the terms under which the diplomatic recognition was accomplished.

The **action** is the shift of Costa Rica's diplomacy. That is the main event and there will be previous and further events, as well as characteristics related to that key event.

**Event -2** Secret mission in Beijing

**Event -1** “La Nación” appeals the disclosure of the secret mission at the Supreme Court

Key event Broken diplomatic relation

**Event 1** James Huang, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan, resigns

**Event 2** China purchases Costa Rica's Bonds

While mentioning the key event, the journalist shows a certain position by the following commentary, as she gives an evaluation to the action taken by Costa Rica:

(1) “In June 2007, Costa Rica did what seemed unthinkable: broke diplomatic relations with Taiwan.”

As seen in Casas-Zamora (2009) the diplomatic shift was not only something that was quietly present as the convenience of the shift has being discussed in Costa Ricas's foreign policy circles for more than 10 years, but

also responded to a a middle income country like Costa Rica situation. Therefore, it was ‘unthinkable’ for the general perspective, but in-depth analysis, like Casas-Zamora’s one, show it was along process, that can even be qualified as ‘logical’ from a ‘realpolitik’ perspective.

As far as the “who” is concerned, i.e. **source** and **story attribution**, there are direct quotes of the president of Costa Rica, Óscar Arias, that is also a **news actor**. In the quoted reasons, results and intentions of such a diplomatic shift are provided.

- (2) “An act of elemental realism” and an “awake to the global context.”
- (3) [Costa Rica] joined “the 168 UN member states to recognize the One China Principle.” [*sic*, PRC’s “One China Policy”]
- (4) “We would like to continue to maintain unofficial relations” [with Taiwan].

In the case of the **places**, i.e. “where”, the specific settings are Beijing and Costa Rica. While in Beijing is the setting where the secret mission took place and Costa Rica is the place of the announcement of the diplomatic shift and from where the Taiwanese Embassy staff was sent off.

As for the “**when**”, is connected to the several events. First, the event -2, i.e. secret mission in Beijing, is dated more than a year ago. Nevertheless, it was disclosed a month before the article was published, i.e. event -1, “La Nación” appeal at the Supreme Court. The key event, break of diplomatic relation, is mentioned in general, with no specific date. Then, the following events, event 1, James Huang, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan, resigns and event 2, China purchases Costa Rica’s Bonds. Moreover, the **background** remains an interesting part. As a matter of fact, there is a full description **previous episodes** and **history** allowing to readers unfamiliar with this topic to better understand the whole issue. The article provides the controversial aspect of the negotiation between Costa Rica and China, disassembled by an appeal of the newspaper La Nación presented to the Costa Rican Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court. It lead to what the journalist mentions as the “broken relation of friendship” between Costa Rica and Taiwan, under the title “*Compra de bonos y más*” (“Bonds purchase and further”)

- (5) “The friendship [between Costa Rica and Taiwan] ended with the establishment of relations with Beijing. Nevertheless, the way the negotiations were developed was keeping them secret for over a year, until a month ago [when] the Costan Rican Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court resolved an appeal by the newspaper La Nación, forcing to disclose details of the deal.”

The “broken relation of friendship” between Costa Rica and Taiwan is described by what Costa Rica got from that diplomatic alliance and mentions what the journalist considers the most emblematic infrastructure that was built with Taiwanese transferred funds.

- (6) “Costa Rica maintained a close relationship with Taiwan since 1944. The infrastructure built with funds from that country is everywhere: docks, bridges and classrooms. In addition to police vehicles and contributions of technical cooperation and training, all meant to receive in exchange support in international forums.

The bridge 'La Amistad', perhaps the most emblematic of this broken relationship, is on the Tempisque river. In due course (opened in 2003), [the bridge] was intended to reflect the excellent terms of the relationship. Its 1.6 kilometers cost US\$ 27 million.”

The same section (“Bonds purchase and further”) offers a list of the benefits that Costa Rica will obtained from the relation with Beijing. Nevertheless, there are no references to the benefits the 'Chinese side' will get from the newly-established diplomatic relation. It would appear that China would get out the relation the diplomatic isolation of Taiwan, as mentioned in previous parts of the article. Therefore, the purpose of the Chinese side is mainly political. As previously mentioned, the article provides the standpoint of Wang Xiaoyuan, the Chinese Ambassador in Costa Rica declared to El Universal, a Mexican newspaper. Mr. Wang mentioned that China considers Costa Rica as a platform to launch its strategy to seek to establish relations with Central and Latin American countries.

Furthermore, the journalist provides a special section to the historical happenings in the cross-strait relations. It is named “*Historia de*

*desaveniencias*” (History of disagreements). The section offers the “why” and “how” of the cross-strait historical happenings.

In the news text there is also a reference in regards of the diplomatic advancement of both countries to get their own position.

(7) “China is trying, since few decades, to diplomatically isolate Taiwan. Their goal is that no country recognizes them to show that is part of its territory”

In addition, in a later section of the article, the journalist comes back to the issue, in a **description** with a nuance of evaluation in the second part of the sentence. As a matter of fact, it also mentions that Taiwan has applied the above mentioned checkbook diplomacy.

(8) “The One China Policy establishes that in order to have relations with Beijing, there must not have any with Taipei that also managed to keep their recognition through checks with more than twenty countries”

Another common way of leaning applied by journalists is showing only one side of a full issue, in other words, to omit one specific side. Within the diplomatic shift some entrepreneurial sectors agreed and other did not. The article presents one side, i.e. disagreement in the diplomatic shift and the potential Free Trade Agreement between Costa Rica and China.

(9) “However, not everything is rosy. Some sectors reject the idea of a [free trade] agreement. The Costa Rican Chamber of Food Industries uttered its rejection. Juan María González, President of the Chamber of Industries said the study [Feasibility analysis of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Costa Rica and China, conducted between January and July 2008 and aiming to sign-up the FTA] was handed over recently and it should be studied before issuing an opinion on the ‘threats’ that could account for the sector.”

A specific humanizing metaphor is used to describe China’s regional policy in Southeast Asia, as it is mentioned to be “hungry” and “carefully cultivate”.

- (10) “Hungry for natural resources and of expansion of its markets, China carefully cultivates [the exchange policy in the] Southeast Asia region.”

The closing sentence of the article sends the readers back to the present, as well as the Taiwanese reaction to the shift. From Costa Rica, the article refers to the newspaper's nation and regards diplomatic relation of Guatemala with Taiwan.

- (11) “Currently, Taiwan focuses its efforts not to lose other partners. Not in vain, Guatemalan President Álvaro Colom has been all week visiting Formosa.”

The **event structure** is presented with events interspersed with each other. It is actually difficult to follow the time line of the episodes. The **cohesion** of the article is well constructed, as the story flows smoothly and context data is provided for readers not familiar with the issue.

## Second article, by “La Tribuna”, Honduras

The article “*Relación de Costa Rica-China es un matrimonio de conveniencia: EE.UU*” (“U.S.: Costa Rica-China is a marriage of convenience”), posted on 4 March 2011, is written by ACAN-EFE, a news agency established in 1972 in Panama, by private media enterprises and EFE (Spanish News Agency). ACAN stands for “Agencia Centroamericana de Noticias” (Central American News Agency). “La Tribuna” reproduced the article based on the WikiLeaks cables published by the Costa Rican newspaper “La Nación”, with a headline, lead and a photo of president Obama shaking hands with Arias, before the watchful eyes of Lula, former president of Brazil.

The **headline** contains a perspective, but does not provide a specific event.

- (H) “*U.S.A: Costa Rica-China relation is a marriage of convenience*”

The **headline** provides a specific statement attributed to the U.S.A., but does not inform the reader who has specifically defined the relation between Costa Rica and China.



Two concepts expressed in the headline:

- (1) there is an active relationship between Costa Rica and China;
- (2) it is negatively evaluated by the U.S.A.

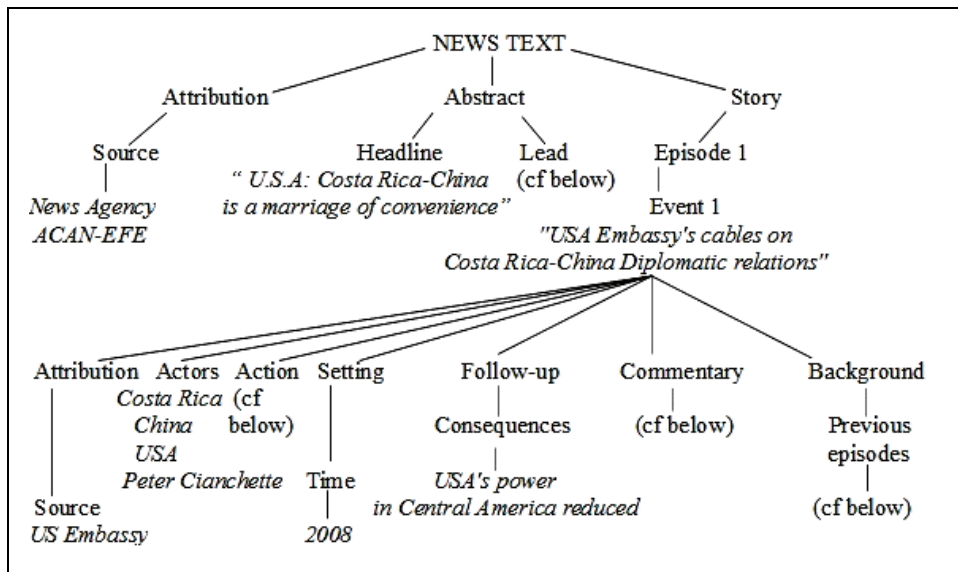


Figure 3: Model discourse structure of “U.S.A: Costa Rica-China is a marriage of convenience”

The **lead** serves as a summary of the article and provides the source of the explicit and controversial statement uttered by U.S.A.

(L) “The United States described the establishment of diplomatic relations between Costa Rica and China as a 'marriage of convenience' in this country relegated human rights in exchange for money, according to WikiLeaks cables published today by the local daily 'La Nación'.

Letters sent by the U.S. Embassy in San José during 2008, account for the actions of the government of Oscar Arias (2006-2010) considered as a “deviation” from the traditional views of a country that calls itself a champion of the human rights”

The **action** is the sending of cables by the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica cables in June and December 2008.

- Event -2 Costa Rica cuts diplomatic relations with Taiwan in June 2007
- Event -1 Costa Rica starts an alliance with China and offers cooperation funds and a stadium
- Key event U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica cables about the relation Costa Rica-China in 2008
- Event 1 WikiLeaks cables published by “La Nación”
- Event 2 Opening of a national stadium (one month later)

While the cables sent were not the most important action, the content of those remain of utmost importance for the article. In fact, as it is described below, it reveals the U.S. position about the gained importance of China in Costa Rica and potentiality in the Central American region, thanks to the diplomatic shift taken by Costa Rica.

As above mentioned, the U.S. Embassy in Costa Rica cables state that the actions taken by Óscar Arias are a “deviation” of the traditional policy of Costa Rica that used to prioritize the human rights. In particular, there are two specific events in 2008: first, in regards of the Chinese repression in Tibet, that former president Arias, Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1987, about which he kept ‘silence’, and second, the cancelled visit of Dalai Lama to Costa Rica. The reference to the previous diplomatic alliance and the eventual shift is mentioned in the article as follows:

- (1) “Costa Rica broke relations with Taiwan 60 years in June 2007 to establish ties with China, who promised an influx of cooperation, such as the donation of a new National Stadium, which will open later this month.

In addition, the two countries negotiated a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which was approved yesterday in the first debate in Congress.”

As for the “who”, i.e. **source** and **story attribution**, there are direct quotes to the former U.S. Ambassador in Costa Rica, Peter Cianchette, who is also **news actor**. The China-Costa Rica relation in a cable issued in December 2008 is described as follows:

- (2) “By now, trade with China has apparently surpassed all other matters on the

Costa Rican-Chinese agenda, a deviation for the small country with great love for human rights.”

The most interesting part remains the one that shows one U.S.A. feared issue, expressed by Cianchette, about their own interests in the Central American isthmus.

- (3) “China has become one of the largest donors of Costa Rica. Although we do not see China's entry as the end of the U.S. influence in the region, it makes clear that we are not the only (nor the most generous) rooster in the yard.”

Moreover, the **source attribution** also goes to the Costa Rican newspaper *La Nación*'s publication of the U.S. Embassy cables provided by WikiLeaks, in which the U.S. mentions the actor as “Costa Rica” only and no individuals referred.

The “where” is San José and specifically in the U.S. Embassy. The “why” only arrives at the closing sentence of the article. It offers a context situation that allows for better understanding of Cianchette's statement at the **headline**, “marriage of convenience”:

- (4) “Costa Rica is the only Central American country that has ties to China, the rest of the nations of the region maintains its traditional relations with Taiwan. For now former President Arias has not addressed these issues.”

The **event structure** is clearly presented with events following one another. Contrary with the article of “el Periódico,” the radius of events covered by the article is simpler. Therefore, the reader will find easy to follow the time line of the events. The **cohesion** of the article is well constructed as the story flows smoothly. Nevertheless, different to the section “History of disagreement” in the previous article, the context data in this article might appear insufficient. Readers unfamiliar with the issue will need to seek further information to have a clear overview. As a whole, it presents the topic in a slightly complete way, with no specific leaning statements.

### Third article, by *La Nación*, Costa Rica

The article “¿Por qué Arias cambió a Taiwán por China?” (“Why Arias replaced Taiwan for China?”), published 20 January 2012, departs from the

diplomatic shift which is portrayed as key event. The author is Óscar Álvarez Araya, former ambassador of Costa Rica in Taipei. The question in the headline creates curiosity in the reader, who by the end is supposed to find the answer.

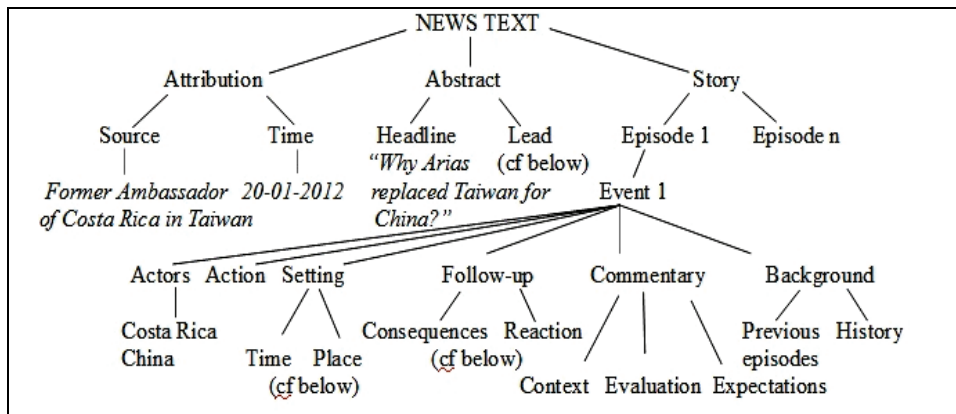


Figure 4: Model discourse structure of “Why Arias replaced Taiwan for China?”

The article is divided into five main sections. The **headline**, the **subheadline**, the **lead**, the **sections** “*Valores y comercio*” (“Values and trade”) and “*Razones políticas*” (“Political reasons”).

The **headline** presents a question, inviting the reader to discover what is behind the diplomatic shift (“why”). The **subheading (SH)** offers the controversial dimension of the Costa Rican's foreign politics change.

(SH) “The secrecy of diplomatic shift will continue to fuel doubts”

The **lead (L)**, notably extensive, offers the “what”, i.e. background of the key event, the event itself (diplomatic shift from Taiwan to China) and the **consequences** for Taiwan, the request to the Embassy of Taiwan to leave the country within one month.

(L) “Óscar Arias’ government, via a delegation in secret mission to Beijing composed by Foreign Minister Bruno Stagno and Finance Minister Guillermo Zúñiga, established diplomatic relations with China on 1 June 2007. *Arias informed the Costa Rican people on June 6th, almost a week later.* The same June 6 Minister Stagno informed the Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Wu Tzu-dan that all diplomatic staff of the [Taiwanese]

embassy had to leave Costa Rica within a month, i.e. by 6 July. President Arias had replaced Taiwan by China.

This decision generated some supports and extended criticism in the media. *One of the most criticized aspects was the secret and non-transparent way in which the plan was hatched and executed.*”

The last sentence of the first paragraph is especially thought-provoking. The author shows the absence of public consensus, already expressed in the **headline** of the article and reinforced by the last sentence. Equally reinforcing is the last sentence of the **lead**.

**Event -1** Establishment of the diplomatic relation Costa Rica-China

Key event Broken relation of Costa Rica-Taiwan

**Event 1** Taiwanese Embassy staff sent off

As for the “who”, in addition to the author, there are three **source attributions**. The text does not only provide the author’s personal perspective, Óscar Arias’ reasons, as well as Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu’s explanations, but also deeper reasons and his viewpoint about the future.

The “where” is provided in the lead and in the first section of the article: Beijing and Costa Rica. Regarding “when,” the key event in **time** is 6 June 2007, when the diplomatic shift was announced by president Arias and Wu Tzu-dan was informed that the Embassy of Taiwan staff was supposed to leave the country within one month. Around a week before the secret mission took place in Beijing. The **background** is the diplomatic relation of Costa Rica and Taiwan, born more than 60 years ago.

In the section “Values and trade”, the introduction of the topic mentions the hypothesis in the media about the logic of the diplomatic shift. Those hypotheses are the consequence from of an outspoken policy that was already mentioned in the **subheading** and in the **lead**.

(1) “All sorts of hypotheses arose about why President Arias decided to sacrifice the 66 [sic] -year diplomatic relationship of friendship and cooperation between Costa Rica and Taiwan.”

It should be corrected that the diplomatic alliance between Costa Rica and Taiwan was established in 1944, thus by 2007 the relation have lasted 63 years. The above sentence also shows an **evaluation** by the author that defines the diplomatic relationship as based in “friendship and cooperation”.

The article introduces the government reasons in the following sentence, which starts to answer the question asked in the **headline**.

- (2) “According to Arias, the change was mainly due to market reasons, given that, after the United States, China has become the second trade partner of Costa Rica in recent years.”

In the second paragraph, Óscar Álvarez Araya expresses his viewpoint about Arias' statement and the consequences in Costa Rica's foreign policy. The author shows that the diplomatic shift is not only a watershed at a national political dimension; it also changes the image of Óscar Arias, who was awarded with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.

- (3) “Such arguments by Arias and the media environment makes all a break with the tradition of Costa Rica's foreign policy usually prided itself as based on principles and values. On the contrary, this time was based on the reasons for the trade balance. Arias himself during [the elections'] government program in 2005 and its foreign policy chapter promised a 'Costa Rica as a moral power' and diplomacy based on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and peace, as seemed natural in a candidate who appeared as the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. However, his second government had sacrificed his idealistic diplomacy and even moralistic features supported during the eighties at the altar of a new diplomacy of political realism and pragmatism market.”

A further answer to the title question, it is related to the difference of the transferred funds by Taiwan and China.

- (4) “Another reason given by Arias, in his own words, was that the donations offered by Taiwan were not sufficient. Consequently, some wonder if then China had offered more cooperation.”

As far as the amounts are concerned, the author quotes the then-president and vice-president of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu.

(5) “In that context, the then president of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian said in the Taipei Times, on June 10th:

“There were many reasons for this (the change of relations), but the most important factor was that China provided \$ 430 million to purchase those relationships.”

A few days later, the then vice president of Taiwan, Annette Lu, confirmed the statement by the head of state of the island and added that Arias was bewitched by China.”

Further answers to the headline question, i.e. “why”, can be founded in the section “Political reasons.” The section title is due to the author's viewpoint to the reason of the shift, which is based in the “realpolitik.” Four reasons are presented. First, Costa Rica needs support from China to guarantee it a non-permanent seat at the Security Council of the United Nations. Second, it hopes a diplomatic relationship with China would neutralize the opposition to the FTA with the U.S. that existed in sectors of the left-wing and movements, while giving them a hope or plan B to the impatient business sectors because of the not ratified FTA. Third, thanks to the Chinese support, Costa Rica would access to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which is particularly appealing to the enterprises active in export business. Fourth, it is the reprisal of China resulting from its recent loss of the diplomatic alliance of Saint Lucia which had switched from Beijing to Taipei.

An unexpected turn arrives by the end of the article. The author mentions that the debate has just started and the full picture of the diplomatic shift of Costa Rica will be depicted in the incoming years.

(6) “Anyway, the debate on this important subject has just started and the secrecy of diplomatic shift will continue to feed the questions and doubts until the story go putting the puzzle pieces in the right and true dimension.”

The **event structure** is presented with events following one another.

Contrary to the article of “elPeriódico” and seemingly to “La Tribuna's” article, the radius of events covered by the article is simple. Therefore, the time line of the events will be easily followed by the reader. The **cohesion** of the article is well constructed, as the story flows smoothly and the background reasons are extensively explained. As a whole, the article presents the events in a slightly complete way (“what”), with full description of reasons (“why”) and strong specific leaning statements (“how”)

## VII. Results

The three articles have contrasting perspectives and answer to different journalistic Ws and the H. Despite those differences, there is still room for the same content. In particular, it can be noted that the key event (“what”) is the same for both the article of “elPeriódico” and “La Nación”, while the article of “La Tribuna” is related to the “how” and provides an evaluation. In the case of “elPeriódico”, the key event is described in a more detailed way than in the other articles and provides a full picture of the complex cross-strait relations (background). Odd enough, none of the articles reports the fact that among the series of cutting ties with Taipei and shifting towards Beijing had already started in mid May 2007. In particular, it is not mentioned that Costa Rica, still in diplomatic alliance with Taiwan, voted against the Taiwanese membership in the World Health Organization (WHO) on 14 May 2007. The meeting on 25 May 2007 in which Foreign Minister James Huang encountered officials from Costa Rica and other Latin American countries in Belize City to reinforce diplomatic relation is not mentioned either. It is worth to mention that despite the meeting, Costa Rica continued with the plans of diplomatic shifting. Reporting these two facts would have enriched the content of the article of “La Nación” and reinforce the author’s arguments.

The first two headlines have a stronger leaning, while the third article content leans strongly within the main body, answering to the headline's question containing a specific journalistic W: “why.”

Both *elPeriódico* and *La Tribuna* provide one common source attribution: *La Nación*, in which the decision of diplomatic shift is often referred by the



nation and in some cases remains only Oscar Arias' action. In the first article, while it might seem that the decision was taken by the president and carried-out by the minister, it also has some references to the country, plainly named as "Costa Rica." The second article tends to refer to the country, rather than the president, as responsible for the diplomatic change. The third article makes Óscar Arias responsible for the decision of diplomatic shift while the process is assigned to Ministers Bruno Stagno and Guillermo Zúniga.

The three articles have common places ("where"): Costa Rica and Beijing. Taiwan is also considered but it does not represent a place where the key event takes place. Taiwan is referred in the consequences and follow-up (Embassy of Taiwan staff relocated and James Huang's resignation). In the second article, the U.S. is a key actor, but is neither a place where the event takes place. But the importance of U.S. in Central American countries and region was revealed here.

## VIII. Conclusion

This study finds Central American newspapers framed Costa Rica's diplomatic shift as a negative story. Political reasons and circumstances under which the agreement between Costa Rica and China was carried-out were particularly criticized: "The friendship [between Costa Rica and Taiwan] ended with the establishment of relations with Beijing. However, the way they developed the negotiations, they were kept secret for over a year, until a month ago [when] the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of the Central American country resolved an appeal by the newspaper *La Nación*, forcing to disclose details of the deal." (Lenhoff, 2008)

In terms of event and discourse structure, the articles varied in leaning and rhetoric figures. The first article clearly disapproves the shift since the headline ("The arm-wrestling's prize won by China is Costa Rica") and shows some specific leaning statements in the text. It also shows disagreement about the checkbook diplomacy applied by Taiwan. While the historical context is particularly useful to understand the cross-strait relation, the second article related to the U.S.'s perspective and position ("U.S.: Costa Rica is a marriage

of convenience”). For the article published in *La Tribuna*, the main story is on Costa Rica-China’s diplomatic relation. The publishing of WikiLeaks cables shows the stark position of *La Tribuna* in revealing hidden parts of the U.S. official discourse. The article shows the disapproval from the northern country. *La Nación*’s article, “Why Arias replaced Taiwan for China?” has an excellent event structure composed by specific happenings. With cohesive structure and smooth flow of storyline, the article presents the events in a slightly complete way (“what”), with full description of reasons (“why”) and strong specific leaning statements (“how”).

Three main actors of this diplomatic shift: Taiwan, Costa Rica, and China, are also portrayed differently. Taiwan is generally portrayed as bearing the consequences, especially in the third article’s lead: “The same June 6 Minister Stagno informed the Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Wu Tzudan that all diplomatic staff of the embassy had to leave Costa Rica within a month, i.e. by 6 July.” Nevertheless, in the first article Taiwan is also accused of deploying checkbook diplomacy: “[t]he one-China policy cannot have relations with Beijing if they have to Taipei, which also managed to keep their recognition through checks with more than twenty country.”

In turn, China is considered as an economic strong force with no respect for human rights that follows its own interests. In the first article, there are two statements that reflect so. First, “Hungry for natural resources and of expanding its markets, China carefully cultivates [the exchange policy in the] Southeast Asia region.” shows the economic force. Second, negative intentions are connected to China: “China is trying, since few decades, to diplomatically isolate Taiwan.”

Costa Rica abandoned its humanitarian advocacy for pure economic purposes. The most emblematic statement is presented in the lead of the second article: “The United States described the establishment of diplomatic relations between Costa Rica and China as a ‘marriage of convenience’ in this country relegated human rights in exchange for money, according to WikiLeaks cables published today by the local daily ‘La Nación’.” Last but not least, Óscar Arias was particularly criticized for not honoring the Nobel Peace Prize won in 1987 and deploying the controversial ‘realpolitik’ in conducting Costa

Rica's diplomacy. The third article is particular critic of this position: “[s]uch arguments by Arias and the media environment makes all a break with the tradition of Costa Rica's foreign policy usually prided itself as based on principles and values. On the contrary, this time was based on the reasons for the trade balance. Arias himself during [the elections'] government program in 2005 and its foreign policy chapter promised a 'Costa Rica as a moral power' and diplomacy based on the principles and values of democracy, human rights and peace, as seemed natural in a candidate who appeared as the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987. However, his second government had sacrificed his idealistic diplomacy and even moralistic features supported during the eighties at the altar of a new diplomacy of political realism and pragmatism market.”

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## 台灣與中國之中美洲結盟競爭 —以哥斯達黎加外交轉向之媒體報導分析為例

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### 摘要

本研究檢視 2007 年 6 月哥斯達黎加與台灣斷交並轉而與中國建交時，中美洲三個報紙的新聞報導對此事的論述及看法。哥斯大黎加在 2007 年的外交轉向被視為台灣在拉丁美洲外交情勢的轉折點，在同一地區其他與台灣建交的七個中美洲友邦（多明尼加、尼加拉瓜、薩爾瓦多、宏都拉斯、巴拿馬、貝里斯），於當時被認為將會以哥斯大黎加的外交轉向為可參考模式，而產生與台灣斷交的可能風險。因此在中美洲地區新聞的呈現中，「哥斯大黎加外交轉向的過程如何形成？」，以及「外交轉向中各方行動者所扮演的角色及如何被描寫？」成為本研究了解拉丁美洲輿論與一般大眾以其拉丁美洲價值對此外交事務的看法。本研究以論述分析方法，並借用 Allan Bell 所發展的新聞論述結構模式分析三篇相關新聞發現，哥斯大黎加的外交轉向被當時的拉丁美洲媒體以負面形象描寫。事件其中以哥、中兩國產生協議的政治理由及情況最受批評：中國以其強大經濟力量之姿受到不尊重人權並只在國際間追求自身利益的負面評價，哥斯大黎加的外交轉向則是純粹為了經濟目的而放棄其所宣揚的人道主義。台灣在此事件中主要被描寫為外交轉向結果的承受者，但也因為其金援外交政策而受部份指責。

**關鍵詞：**台灣、中美洲、哥斯達黎加、中國、國際關係、外交學、  
論述分析法、新聞報導